Matilda Nelson

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Personal Profile

My name is Matilda Mariah Nelson. My mother’s name is Bonnie and my father’s name is Mark. I have three older sisters and one brother in the middle. I’m the youngest by six years. When my parents got married they agreed that my dad could name the boys and my mom could name the girls. They both had the power to veto a name they didn’t like. Little did they know my dad would get the short end on choices. My mother decided it would be best if her children were named after ancestors, as names are very important to her. When my mother finally had me she realized she hadn’t used any names from her mother’s German side. So she searched for names that were not hard to pronounce. She finally found Charlotte and Matilda. She wanted Mariah as my middle name but couldn’t decide on the first. So she allowed my older siblings to choose which name they preferred. They like Matilda Mariah best because they felt M&M would be a cute nickname. So I was named Matilda Mariah Nelson. In the end nobody has ever called me M&M. Those close to me call me either Millie or Tillie.

When I was younger I took horse-riding lessons (English riding) and enjoyed this very much. I know how to get the horse into a trot and do a proper post. I also learned how to canter, gallop, and jump the horse. I even participated in jumping and riding competitions. It’s been quite a few years since I’ve ridden regularly, but I still consider it an interest and wish I could find the time to fit it into my life again.

One of my favorite pastimes is reading fantasy books, such as the Narnia chronicles or the Hobbit. I’ve read and reread the *Harry Potter* book series over and over again, if you can call that a hobby. I’ve watched the films and discussed the books with anyone who will listen. I do love to read. My older sisters are on the same page with me in this interest. They all live very far away, so we try to call, face-time or video-chat almost daily. This summer we all converged on the Harry Potter theme park in Florida and spent four days together. It was perfect.

My favorite hobby is traveling. When I have a trip coming up, I love to plan out each day and decide what I will pack. I’ve had the opportunity to meet beautiful people around the world, experience unique traditions, and try out many interesting foods. I’ve tried to learn a little about the different cultures and languages of places I’ve been. Seeing this world is very important to me.

Last September about this time I met Josie Solomon. She was giving an amazing devotional about her bipolar disorder and described a service program she has started called The 444 Project. About once a year they pick a place in the world that needs some service and joy. I was very interested in her story so I started following her on instagram and a couple months later they announced that they were planning on going to Puno, Peru July of 2017. Since I love to travel this sounded like something I needed to do, and I was very interested in what the 444 Project does.

So I approached my parents and explained that if I took a semester off of school and got a second job that I could pay for this humanitarian experience myself. My parents liked the idea and were okay with me taking a break from school and traveling by myself. My mom agreed that I could learn just as much on this trip as I could in a semester of college.

I signed up and started saving my money. After fall semester ended I found another job as a janitor at an elementary school close to home. Because classes didn’t tie me down, I was able to actually plan three trips. I flew to Florida to meet up with my sisters and go to Harry Potter world. A month later I tagged along with my oldest sister and her family for two weeks in England and Wales. It was an amazing experience. I played “nanny” to my nieces and nephews and was able to get to know them better.

Finally July came around and I started to pack for my adventure in Peru. I didn’t get nervous until about two weeks before I had to leave. I was going to meet up for the first time with other volunteers at the airport. When we finally got to Peru I was extremely happy. I love South America very much after having lived in Ecuador, Argentina, and Chile. Being in Peru reminded me how much I missed the different cultures. I was able to climb the steps of Machu Picchu, see the floating islands on Lake Titicaca, and practice my rusty Spanish.

My favorite part was working in the orphanage in Puno. It took us a day on the bus to get there. In the end we were only helping for three days. But it was amazing. The facility needed paint repair, and trenches dug to get running water to the rooms where the children lived. But most importantly, the children needed love. We got to sing, dance, and play games with them. These kids needed hugs and human interaction. They were all very cute and I wanted to take them all home.

I happened to be at the orphanage the day I turned 20. It was a very special birthday that I will remember always. I believe that making the decision to interrupt my school plans and follow a dream was an important event for me. It was good for me to make an independent decision and see it through to the end. I was able to travel to a country I had never been to, and get to know some beautiful people. It was truly worth my time and money.

I’m planning on finishing my Associate’s Degree at Weber State this next spring. Knowing what career path to choose has been difficult for me. At this point it is a toss up between studying film and getting a degree in animation. I would like to apply to BYU Provo this next December and move down to Provo next fall. I know BYU’s animation program is excellent. If I don’t get accepted, I believe that having an Associate’s Degree from Weber State will put me in a good position for other excellent options.